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Bread and Water as Metaphors for the Word of God in the Four Gospels

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The Son is the fullest expression of God the Father (Hebrews 1 : 1–2). However, even Jesus Christ uses a metaphor that since antiquity is one of the most popular stylistic tropes used to speak about the Word of God.¹ A brief comparison,² the metaphor consists of transferring meaning from one term to another or of linking together two separate, often rather disparate basic concepts in order to create a new concept.³ Thanks to this, the Word of God can be expressed with the help of an image, something concrete and perceptible to the senses that is not exhausted by technical concepts such as “scripture,” “books,” or “scroll.” The addressees’ experience of God’s speech is therefore much more diverse.⁴ They comprehend role of the Word of God in the history of individuals and the whole nation or even of other peoples. In the historically diverse context of the lives of Biblical protagonists and addresses of God’s speech, the Lord’s Word becomes a sword (Wisdom 18 : 15; Ephesians 6 : 17; Hebrews 4 : 12)⁵ and a shield protecting one from the enemy; the lamp that illuminates the way (Psalms 119 [118], 105; 2 Peter 1 : 19) and a rod that strikes the heathen (Isaiah 11 : 4); and, finally, fire (Jeremiah 23 : 29) and the seed whose soil is man (Jeremiah 23 : 28; Luke 8 : 11). The Word of God is not only a point of

1 The noun λόγος, which also means “speech,” “statement,” and “teaching,” corresponds to the terms דָּבָר and אָמָרָה, which in the Hebrew Bible correspond to the term “words.”

2 See: H. Lausberg, *Retoryka literacka. Podstawy wiedzy o literaturze*, przeł., oprac. i wstępem poprzedził A. Gorzkowski, Bydgoszcz 2002, p. 316.

3 See: E. Miodońska-Brookes, A. Kulawik, M. Tatara, *Zarys poetyki*, Warszawa 1978, p. 332.

4 See: K. Bardski, *Słowo oczyma gołębiczy. Metodologia symboliczno-alegorycznej interpretacji Biblii oraz jej teologiczne i duszpasterskie zastosowanie*, Warszawa 2007, p. 100.

5 B. Urbanek writes about this in greater detail in: *Miecz jako metafora słowa Bożego*, [in:] *Usłyszeć słowo Boże – żywe i ostrzejsze niż miecz. Materiały z XXXVIII Sympozjum Katechetycznego Międzyzakonnego Wyższego Instytutu Katechetycznego w Krakowie (1 marca 2008 r.)*, red. A. E. Klich, Kraków 2008, p. 197–212.

escape or defensive tool, but it also has the role of a factor that awakens one to be active. Like bread and water, it is above all food necessary for life. This basic truth is fully developed by all the canonical figures in the Gospels, but it stems from the Old Testament.

1. In the Old Testament

Nothing helps one to appreciate bread and water more than its partial and especially long-term absence. For the Hebrews following the voice of God to the Promised Land speaking to them through Moses, this should have been a special experience. It found its reflection in the Pentateuch and is present in the Biblical Books of Wisdom as well as in prophecies,⁶ which the authors of the New Testament, especially the evangelists, frequently reference. Thus it is worth outlining the Biblical background of the events described by them in order to better understand the metaphor of bread and water used in the Gospel narratives.

1.1. In the Pentateuch

Bread juxtaposed with the Word of God first appears in the second speech given by Moses on the steppes of Moab before the Israelites' entry into Canaan (Deuteronomy 4: 41–11, 32). The introduction to this reflection consists of recalling the forty-year journey of the Chosen People through the desert (Deuteronomy 8: 2). After it, an explanation of God's pedagogy occurs:⁷ "He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8: 3). The memory that Moses refers to in the Book of Deuteronomy (5: 15; 8: 2, 18; 15: 15; 16: 12; 24: 18, 22) is not only a vehicle of history, but above all of spiritual experiences that should be

6 The order of the books under discussion corresponds to their place in the Christian Biblical canon.

7 God's conduct towards the Chosen People is expressed in the relationship between father and son, which Moses references in Deuteronomy 8: 5: "So you must realize that the Lord, your God, disciplines you even as a man disciplines his son."

interpreted with faith.⁸ They are necessary for revealing the intentions of the human heart (Deuteronomy 8 : 2), becoming the basis for the granting of the reward that is good rendered by God (Deuteronomy 8 : 16). Not the bread that is the fruit of the work of human hands, but “everything that comes from the Lord’s mouth” is the refuge of man’s life⁹ and the subject of hope. Rejecting it becomes the cause of the fall and, consequently, of destruction that is predicted by the words: “you will perish utterly” (Deuteronomy 8 : 19); “so shall you too perish for not heeding the voice of the Lord, your God” (Deuteronomy 8 : 20).

This “everything” expressed by God requires complete acceptance and carrying out of God’s directives (commands), which are His paths (Deuteronomy 8 : 6). They lead one to gain and preserve the goods of this world and well being in the earthly life of the Chosen People, whose strength is dependent solely on the Lord.¹⁰ It also makes the person capable of fulfilling the Covenant with the Lord: “Otherwise, you might say to yourselves, ‘It is my own power and the strength of my own hand that has obtained for me this wealth.’ Remember then, it is the Lord, your God, who gives you the power to acquire wealth, by fulfilling, as he has now done, the covenant which he swore to your fathers” (Deuteronomy 8 : 17–18).

Although Moses’ speech under analysis here is addressed to all of Israelite society, specific parts of it focus on the individual recipient. This is indicated by the change in the forms of the verbs and personal pronouns from the plural to the singular form. In this way, responsibility for accepting the Word of God directed to the people is of an individual nature, and the experience of the individual – also thanks to memory – transcends time with the participation of all members of the community.¹¹ The latter trait of the Word of God in the Old Testament is indicated by the Biblical manna mentioned in Deuteronomy 8 : 3, which according to Exodus 16 : 4 and Psalm 78 (77): 24 the Lord sends

8 *Sentencje Ojców*, translated from the Hebrew by M. Friedman with a commentary by P. Śpiwak, Kraków 2015, p. 19, § 3, 8: “He who forgets but one word from the learned teaching according to Scripture puts his life in danger.” According to Paweł Śpiwak, the author of the commentary to *Sentencje Ojców*, “memory has great significance for faith and is the precondition necessary for the survival of the people” (ibidem, p. 104).

9 See: S. Łach, *Księga Powtórzonego Prawa. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Poznań–Warszawa 1971, p. 153.

10 J. Lemański w „*Nie samym chlebem tylko żyje człowiek...*” (Pwt 8, 3b), [in:] *Słowo Boże w życiu i misji Kościoła*, red. S. Szymik, Lublin 2009, p. 58 notes that “the ancient Israelites understood only worldly existence through life.”

11 Cf. ibidem, p. 57–58.

on the earth like rain.¹² The way of giving people this unique gift suggests its connection to water and its origin, or God.¹³ In the Biblical account of Israel's stay in the desert, He also guarantees His people water by making it present in a rock (Numbers 20 : 11–13, 21 : 16; Deuteronomy 8 : 15). This event is a motif that is frequently used in the Books of Wisdom in the Old Testament.

1.2. In the Books of Wisdom

According to Psalm 78 (77) : 15–16, 20; 105 (104) : 41, God split a rock and generously gave drink to His people, causing the water obtained in this miraculous way to flow across the desert like a river. This event, in which the author of Wisdom 11 : 4 sees the fulfillment of the request carried to God by thirsty people and undertakes the motif of the attempt from Deuteronomy 8 : 5. The miraculous appearance of water from the rock analogous to manna sent from heaven also confirms the fidelity of Yahweh and is tied to His promise. The psalmist speaks of it: “For he remembered his sacred promise to Abraham his servant” (Psalm 105 [104] : 42). The reference to God's promise also indirectly indicates the faith of the patriarch, who through his obedience, which is tested in the land of the Temple Mount (Genesis 22 : 1–18), becomes worthy of a blessing (Genesis 22 : 16–18).

The Biblical authors see genuine wisdom in the attitude of fidelity to God and His Word, which feeds the beloved of the Lord (Wisdom 16 : 26; see: Proverbs 1 : 7; Sirach 21 : 11, 33 : 2, 43 : 33). The heart that searches for it is described as prudent in Proverbs 15 : 14 (Hebrew Bible: חָכָם) and simple (Septuagint: ὀρθή), while the inspired author says that the mouths of the fools spurt¹⁴ folly. What a person feeds on depends on his or her spiritual

12 According to Exodus 16 : 13–14 and Numbers 11 : 9, the appearance of manna is accompanied by the appearance of dew.

13 J. Lemański sees here a reference to the beliefs of the ancient agrarian religions, which saw a correlation between bountiful harvests and the activity of the gods, especially the god of thunder. The exegete notes the similarity to the motif appearing in Hosea 2 : 7, 10–11. 23–24. See also: *Księga Wyjścia. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Częstochowa 2009, p. 357.

14 The Hebrew Bible uses the term נָחַל (to graze, to feed), while the Septuagint uses the verb γινώσκω (to know) to describe this activity. However, the latest Polish translations of the Bible are inclined to use the meaning of the text in its Hebrew version. In the fifth edition of the Millennium Bible (from 2013), the following text appears: “The mouths of fools drown in folly.” Meanwhile, the St. Paul Edition of the Bible contains the version: “The mouths of fools swallow folly,” which is closer to the text from the fourth edition of the Millennium Bible, where there is talk of “the mouths of fools feeding on folly.”

condition. He or she must choose if he or she will sit at the table set by the personification of Wisdom or of Folly, its opposite, in life, which is depicted using the Biblical image of a feast.

When inviting revelers to her feast, the first female figure mentioned in the Book of Proverbs offers them her property (Proverbs 9 : 2, 5): food (which includes bread) and drink (wine mixed with water),¹⁵ which are metaphors for the Word of God.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the second figure, called Folly, offers nothing of her own. Thus she calls: “Stolen water is sweet, and bread gotten secretly is pleasing!” (Proverbs 9 : 17). Her revelers are but the shadows of the dead (Proverbs 9 : 18a), because the food she uses to lure passersby takes away their lives, leading them into the abyss: “In the depths of the nether world are her guests!” (Proverbs 9 : 18b). Only the wisdom contained in God’s law sincerely responds to human desires. The author of the Book of Sirach compares it to a mother and virgin spouse who feeds people overcome with fear of God with the bread of reason and the water of wisdom (see: Sirach 15 : 3). He who tries it still wants more: “He who obeys me will not be put to shame, he who serves me will never fail” (Sirach 24 : 21).

Contact with the Word of God and the wisdom contained in it increase the person’s need for it, and those who feed on the Word of the Lord can be sure they will be free of sin (Sirach 24 : 22) and externally safe. The loss of these two values is read by the prophets as a consequence of abandoning the road indicating by God in the Law, and of even being against the Lord.

1.3. In the Books of Wisdom

As bread and water, the Word of God ensures physical existence for the nation; it also impacts its intellectual and spiritual condition, at the same time impinging on the shape of the life of the community, whose representatives are mentioned in the prophecy.¹⁷ Rejection of God’s Law and acting contrary to its commands leads not so much to the upset of the social order as to the

15 S. Szymik, *Słowo Boże jako pokarm Mądrości według Prz 9, 1–6*, [in:] *Słowo Boże w życiu i misji Kościoła*, red. S. Szymik, Lublin 2009, p. 97 notes another custom consisting of the mixing of wine with herbs and honey.

16 Ibidem, p. 99–100.

17 According to Tadeusz Brzegowy, the reference to bread and water as support indicates the prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem, when the Babylonians occupied the city, as its defenders’ stores of bread and water had been exhausted. See: *Księga Izajasza (rozdziały 1–12). Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Częstochowa 2010, p. 244–245.

gradual erosion of the life of the nation and, ultimately, its enslavement. This is precisely established in the prophecy contained in the Book of Isaiah: "Sons have I raised and reared, but they have disowned me!" (Isaiah 1 : 2B), which is complemented by the prophet's further words: "The Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall take away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and prop (all supplies of bread and water): Hero and warrior, judge and prophet, fortune-teller and elder, The captain of fifty and the nobleman, counselor, skilled magician, and expert charmer.¹⁸ I will make striplings their princes; the fickle shall govern them, and the people shall oppress one another, yes, every man his neighbor. The child shall be bold toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable" (Isaiah 3 : 1–5).¹⁹

Meanwhile, the righteous and honest will not lack bread or water (Isaiah 33 : 15–16). The verb used in the passive form of the future tense in the next part of Isaiah's prophecy, δοθήσεται, is an example of a typical *passivum theologicum*. It points to the activity of giving, or God, hidden from the author's world. His activity, orientated towards the future, brings hope that the Word of God will not be definitively taken away from the nation, that the foreseen lack of food and resulting lack of spiritual food is only temporary in nature. In Isaiah 43 : 20, God openly presents Himself as the one Who will bring water and rivers to the desert in order to give drink to His Chosen People. An analogous image of Yahweh arises out of His other statements: "I will pour out water upon the thirsty ground, and streams upon the dry land; I will pour out my spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing upon your descendants. They shall spring up amid the verdure like poplars beside the flowing waters" (Isaiah 44 : 3–4). Although the contents of this prophecy seem to focus on God's actions expressed with the help of a complex aquatic metaphor,²⁰ all are the consequence of the promise given by the Lord. The Word that Yahweh through the intercession of His prophets sends to the people suffering in exile and future generations, compared to thirsty ground and dried land is in itself

18 Although God's Law harshly prohibited the practice of magic, the occult, and all sorcery as well as summoning of the spirits of the dead (Deuteronomy 18 : 10–12), after settling in Canaan the Israelites not infrequently participated in these practices, which were disgusting in the eyes of God (Deuteronomy 18 : 10–12; 2 Kings 17 : 17, 21 : 6; 2 Chronicles 33 : 6; Isaiah 47 : 12).

19 T. Brzegowy, *Księga Izajasza (rozdziały 1–12)*..., op. cit., p. 243 shares the view that the professional groups mentioned in the prophecy present the image of the Israelites' society at Isaiah's time (eight century BC).

20 Cf. W. Pikor, *Soteriologiczna metafora wody w Księdze Izajasza*, Lublin 2009, p. 253.

life-giving.²¹ It is they who are the poor from the message of Deutero-Isaiah²² who then are to come closer to the water in order to take without payment what is really bread (Isaiah 55 : 1–2). The water is the Word of God. Coming to it means coming closer to God Himself, who encourages His people to a new exodus from the land of exile²³ and foretells a new covenant (Isaiah 55 : 3b; see: Jeremiah 31 : 31). This is an important point of reference in the prophecy, especially in Jeremiah, for whom the covenant with Yahweh takes on an individual nature, which expresses God's intention to write the Law into the heart of each Israelite (Jeremiah 31 : 33).

Before knowledge of God becomes widespread among the nation, it is first the subject of encounter with the prophet who is the first addressee of the words of the Lord (Jeremiah 1 : 4–5). In them, Yahweh calls Himself the source of living water, which the people turned into cracked cisterns, which are a metaphor for pagan deities (Jeremiah 2 : 13). Neither the lifeless deities nor the political alliances symbolized by the Nile and the River Assyria (Jeremiah 2 : 18) can quench the desire for peace and guarantee the nation's existence, which is bitter as a result of its apostasy (Jeremiah 2 : 19). The bitter life of the nation is juxtaposed with the fate of the prophet who feeds on the words that the Lord placed in his mouth (Jeremiah 1 : 9). For Jeremiah, it is a delight and joy of the heart (Jeremiah 15 : 16). Ezekiel talks about it in a similar way. The third of these prophets is considered to be the greatest – for years, he was close to Jeremiah – and wrote that the scroll given to him by God, which was consumed in accordance with Yahweh's guidelines, was sweet as honey in his mouth (Ezekiel 3 : 3). Filling one's stomach and internal organs with the scroll indicates the necessity of completely assimilating the Word of God.²⁴ The prophet is supposed to not only transmit it to the people, but first he himself must accept and digest it so that it enters his bloodstream and becomes part of his life. The vision of unification with the Word of the Lord in Ezekiel also expresses the essence of prophetic mission.²⁵

21 Cf. L. Stachowiak, *Księga Izajasza II–III (rozdziały 40–66). Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz, ekskursy*, Poznań 1996, p. 238.

22 Cf. W. Pikor, *Soteriologiczna metafora wody...*, p. 260.

23 Cf. ibidem, p. 307.

24 Cf. A. J. Tkacik, *Ezechiele*, [in:] *Grande Commentario Biblico*, a cura di R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, R. E. Murphy, ed. italiana a cura di A. Bonora, R. Cavedo, F. Maistrello, Brescia 1973, p. 450.

25 Cf. S. Homerski, *Księga Ezechiela. Tłumaczenie, wstęp, komentarz*, Lublin 1998, p. 24.

The Old Testament metaphor of food/bread perfectly shows the necessity of a close relationship between man and God and with God Himself, but it does not exhaust the topic of spiritual closeness between them expressed with the help of the activity of feeding and eating; giving and taking; desiring or thirsting and taking (buying), drinking, and pouring. Its fulfillment is revelation contained in Jesus Christ and presented in the New Testament.

2. In the Four Gospels

Among the books of the New Testament, motifs of the Word of God as food (bread and water) appear mostly in the Gospels. However, the fourth of them presents it in the clearest form. It presents developed theology of the word-body-bread-water as food for eternal life. It is worth following the appearance of all the above-mentioned metaphors for the Word of God in the indicated texts in order to notice within them elements of continuity with the first part of Biblical revelation and that which is a complete novelty.

2.1. In the Synoptic Gospels

It seems that the motif of water as a metaphor for the Word of God does not appear in the synoptic Gospels. However, they are suggested by the verbs related to desire and thirst in the Gospel pericopes. The metaphor of water also allows us to discover an allegorical approach. Meanwhile, the relationship between bread and the Word of God is very clear. It presents it parallel to the narrative of the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 : 1–11 and Luke 4 : 1–13 in an obvious way.²⁶ Direct references to these words are missing, however, in the accounts of the multiplication of the loaves in Matthew 14 : 13–21, 15, 32–39; Mark 6 : 34–44, 8 : 1–10; and Luke 9 : 12–17 as well as in Jesus' dialogue with the Canaanite woman according to Matthew 15 : 21–28 and the Syro-Phoenician woman according to Mark 7 : 24–30. Despite this can the bread present in the indicated texts be interpreted in a metaphorical fashion and be tied to the Word of God? An answer to this question comes from an analysis of the use of the motif of bread by the synoptics in the specific pericopes, which takes

26 Mark 1 : 12–13 contains only a lapidary reference to this event.

into account their nearest literary context as well as possible Old Testament implications.

2.1.1. In the narratives about the temptation of Jesus
(Matthew 4 : 1–14, Luke 4 : 1–13) and in the Sermon
on the Mount, in the valley (Matthew 5 : 6, Luke 6 : 21)

In both extensive scenes depicting the temptation of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the devil questions Christ's divinity, but otherwise indicates the subject and purpose of the miraculous transformation proposed to Him. The former's account speaks of stones that are to become bread (Matthew 4 : 3), while the latter's account mentions stones and bread (Luke 4 : 3). This leads to the question of what this disparity could result from. It seems that Matthew's account references the Biblical manna that God sent down to feed the Israelites wandering across the desert.²⁷ Meanwhile, the individualized version, which is preserved in Luke's text, emphasizes the personal character of the test that God subjects every Israelite to.²⁸ Despite the similar circumstances, the Biblical trial of the people in the desert and the temptation of Jesus are not the same. God's activity seeks to expose the truth about man and prove if he really believes His words. Meanwhile, the demon works to make the tempted subject act against the Word of God, thus turning towards worldly and thus ephemeral needs.

The devil's temptation of Jesus has the form of the command "say" (εἶπε); he adds to it the conjunction "that" (ὅτι). An identical construction appears only one other time in the Bible, in Matthew 20 : 21, in Jesus' request to the mother of Zebedee's sons that they sit on His right and left in God's kingdom.²⁹

27 Cf. F. Mickiewicz, *Evangelia według świętego Łukasza (rozdziały 1–11). Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Częstochowa 2011, p. 245.

28 Cf. *ibidem*.

29 In addition to Matthew 4 : 3 and 20 : 21, the aorist imperative form of the verb λέγω also appears four times in the first Gospel; Jesus is the addressee of the request expressed by him in three of those times. The centurion speaks to Him, asking to renounce the word and in this way heal his son (Matthew 8 : 8). The pupils of the Pharisees ask Jesus to explain the tax for Caesar (Matthew 22 : 17). Finally, Jesus' disciples ask for Him to explain His words on the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 24 : 3). Jesus is the object of the statement in which He is asked to inform to the Church about the brother who stubbornly persists in sin, despite numerous reprimands. Neither in any of these cases nor in Matthew 4 : 3 or 20 : 21 is there a need to point out God's prerogative nor to reveal the nature of His relationship to Jesus. In addition to Matthew, the only other synoptic who uses the imperative form of the verb "say" is Luke. In the version of the Gospel edited by him, the subject of the request is the centurion (Luke 7 : 7), the Pharisee Simon

In response, Jesus explains that those who receive seats are those for whom His God the Father had prepared them (Matthew 20 : 23). In this way, God's prerogative to grant eternal reward is emphasized. Most important, however, is that His identity as Jesus' Father, Who is concerned about the people and prepares for them seats next to His Son is revealed. Who, then, can receive it?

The scene of the temptation at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew gives clear guidelines. Christ firmly responds to the devil's persistent temptation: "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4 : 4). Luke the Evangelist preserves a shorter version of Jesus' logion: "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone'" (Luke 4 : 4). The words of Deuteronomy 8 : 3 are cited in both statements.³⁰ Citing the exception to the Law, Jesus as the beloved Son (Matthew 3 : 17; see: Mark 1 : 11; Luke 3 : 22) is an expression of complete obedience to God, at the same time being a paragon of humanity³¹ that understands that God's word nourishes and preserves those who trust the Lord (see: Wisdom 16 : 26). Obedience to the word – and thus to God Himself – ensures one's participation in the legacy of the Lord Jesus and is opposed to the devil's demands. Being faithful to the Lord as the one sent by Him, Jesus also satisfies righteousness. According to Matthew, Jesus calls those who thirst and desire (πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες) righteousness blessed in the Sermon on the Mount (μακάριοι, Matthew 5 : 6). Meanwhile, according to the parallel version presented by Luke (6 : 21), the subject of thirst and desire is not explicitly defined. However, the reference to those who laugh and those who cry can be interpreted as an indirect allusion to the state of experiencing righteousness or experiencing its lack thereof. In light of Psalm 106 (105): 3, blessed are those who follow the commandments, constantly doing what is upright. The Old Testament calls not only God Himself, Whom the human soul desires (Psalm 42 [41] : 2–3; Psalm

(Luke 7 : 40), Martha (Luke 10 : 40), and someone from the crowd (Luke 12 : 13), while Jesus is the addressee of the statement. The use of the form εἶπε in Luke's text has a parallel in the Gospel according to Matthew only one time. This is the statement of the centurion asking for the healing of his servant, and Jesus' positive reaction is a response to the faith of the Roman soldier (Matthew 8 : 13; Luke 7 : 9).

30 J. Lemański, „Nie samym chlebem tylko żyje człowiek...” (Pwt 8, 3b)..., op. cit., p. 61 notes that the verse from Deuteronomy 8 : 3 quoted in Matthew 4 : 4 retains the essence of the Hebrew text: "by bread alone," but also adds the phrase "but by every word" from the source Q.

31 Cf. F. Mickiewicz, *Evangelia według świętego Mateusza (rozdziały 1–13). Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Częstochowa 2005, p. 176.

63 [62] : 2), but also all His works (Tobit 3 : 2), judgments (Psalm 119 [118] : 75), and commandments upright. Thus the desire for righteousness contains within itself hunger and thirst for the word expressed in the Bible in an often metaphorical way with the help of bread and water or food itself. The urgent need described as hunger and thirst – which is also the case in Luke and in the parallel pericope about the sermon in the valley – can be satisfied only by God through the *passivum theologicum* in Jesus' speech: "will be satiated" (χορτασθήσονται). Expressing this activity in the past tense does not relativize its efficiency. The reward for the righteous thus is not hypothetical. The promise is fulfilled in the Biblical "already," "here," and "now," as in Jeremiah's prophecy in which God satiates the soul of every thirsty and hungry person (Jeremiah 31 : 25). Those who hunger and thirst righteousness are already satisfied.

Jesus' rejection of the devil's temptation on the one hand restores the order that was destroyed and referenced in the genealogy of the Biblical Adam preceding the temptation scene (Luke 3 : 38). On the other hand, it reminds the reader of the goodness of God, Who not only knows the needs of His people, but also perfectly knows how to remedy them. This characteristic trait of Jesus' activity is also presented by the Gospel stories about the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

2.1.2. In the Narratives about the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes (Matthew 14 : 13–21; Mark 6 : 34–44; Luke 9 : 12–17; and Matthew 15 : 32–39; Mark 8 : 1–10)

Among the synoptics, only Matthew and Mark write about the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Both accounts by both evangelists are preceded by information about the beheading of John the Baptist (Matthew 14 : 10–12; Mark 6 : 27–29). Mark adds mention of the gathering of the disciples and Jesus' request that they go to a deserted place and rest (Mark 6 : 30–31). Meanwhile, the account of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes edited by Luke describes an event that Matthew and Mark first presented. The third evangelist also mentions the beheading of John, but this is contained in an independent speech ascribed to Herod (Luke 9 : 9). Meanwhile, the description of Jesus' miracle is directly preceded by the meeting with His disciples and a laconic reference to preaching the kingdom of God and the healings (Luke 9 : 10–11). What does all this mean? What significance do they have for the interpretation of later events?

In light of the Gospel, the life and death of John the Baptist are inextricably tied to the life and death of Jesus, which in any case they foreshadow.³² The shameful beheading of John is similar to the deaths of the Old Testament prophets³³ and thus ends their era. Thus from that point on all attention is focused on Jesus, His authority, and His power, which according to Mark 6 : 30 and Luke 9 : 10 turned out to guarantee the success of the apostles' mission. Christ gathers the people of God, teaches them, performs miracles in front of them, and feeds them in a deserted place. All these aspects of Jesus' activity have their parallels in the Biblical narrative about the journey of Israel across the desert and the story of God sending the manna (Exodus 16 : 4, 14–18; Deuteronomy 8 : 3; Psalm 78 [77] : 24). The Old Testament figures, however, find their fulfillment in Jesus. He is the intercessor of the people and, at the same time, the one Who leads them like a shepherd.³⁴ His bond with God is not defined by the mere vocation and being destined for a mission (like Moses' or Joshua's). Jesus' words and actions result from His relationship to His Father,³⁵ Who is the God of Israel. Having outlined the relationship between the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and the story of the Biblical manna, it is worth examining this event, which the synoptics present rather consistently.³⁶

Although the disciples seem to be the first to notice the need to feed the people, and Jesus gives them the task of providing food, it is Christ Himself Who takes the initiative. Upon hearing His word, the people gather in the deserted place, while Jesus takes the loaves and fishes, gives a blessing, and through his disciples hands out the food to those gathered. In this Gospel scene, we can detect several Biblical analogies.

Jesus' command to sit on the green grass mentioned by Matthew and Mark hearkens to Biblical images in which water, which has the role of a metaphor

32 Cf. J. R. Donahue, D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, Collegeville 2002, p. 202 (Sacra Pagina, 2).

33 Cf. F. Mickiewicz, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza (rozdziały 14–28). Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Częstochowa 2008, p. 38.

34 R. H. Stein, *Mark*, Grand Rapids 2008, p. 313 notes Biblical allusions in Mark 6 : 30–44 to Numbers 27 : 17; 1 Kings 22 : 17; 2 Chronicles 18 : 16; Jeremiah 31 : 10; and Ezekiel 34 : 5, 8; Zechariah 10 : 12, 13 : 17; Judith 11 : 19; and compares the image of Jesus the shepherd with King David and his successors as the shepherd of the people of God (Psalm 78 [77] : 70–72; Ezekiel 34 : 23).

35 The revelation is found in both. A. Malina writes about this in greater detail in the article *Obraz Boga Ojca*, [in:] *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*, t. 1. *Ewangelie Synoptyczne i Dzieje Apostolskie*, red. M. Rosik, Wrocław 2008, p. 11–80.

36 Only Mark 6 : 37 mentions the 200 days' worth of food that, according to the disciples, is not enough to buy enough bread for the hungry. Meanwhile, Mark and Luke both avoid the reference in Matthew 14 : 21 to women and children; they just say that the crowd contained 5,000 men.

for the Word of God, is the factor that brings life to nature and causes it to expand. In Deuteronomy 32 : 1–2, God's speech, which falls on the grass like dew and rain, is addressed to the earth. An allegorical image of Israel as grass (χόρτος) also appears in the part of Deutero-Isaiah's prophecy dealing with Jacob's descendants, who after receiving the Spirit from God will "spring up amid the verdure like poplars beside the flowing waters" (Isaiah 44 : 4).

However, the scene presented by the synoptics is most consistent with Psalms 23 (22): 1–2. The subject of the statement calls God his Lord and shepherd Who allows Him to lie in green pastures and needs him to the waters that are a place of rest. Even if none of the evangelists directly references this psalm, they lead to it by using the motif of green grass. Although the element of the description of nature presented in this narrative suggests springtime and the looming Passover,³⁷ from an allegorical perspective in Matthew and Mark it can also indirectly refer to water as a metaphor for the Word of God.

Jesus' receiving the loaves and fishes and their subsequent distribution through the apostles is reminiscent of the attitude of Elisha, who, having received twenty barley loaves from the first fruits and fresh grain requested that his servant distribute these gifts among 100 people (2 Kings 4 : 42–44).³⁸ In both cases, those gathered ate until they were full and what remained was taken. Unlike the evangelists, who mention twelve baskets of what was left over, the author of 2 Kings does not specify the quantity of what had remained. In the Old Testament text, however, it is clearly said that the overall effect of this event was a perfect fulfillment of God's prophecy. The miracle that has taken place results from God's will. Elisha's role is thus reduced to interceding in the event whose protagonist is Yahweh Himself. Despite these apparent similarities to the life of Elisha, the Gospel narratives are not their continuation,³⁹ and they present an absolute novelty of the multiplication of loaves and fishes. This event supersedes the Biblical figures; it is in reality their

37 Cf. T. Hergesel, *Jezus cudotwórca*, Katowice 1987, p. 159.

38 Some exegetes also point out similarities between this event and a miracle performed by the prophet Elijah who while a guest of a widow in Zarephath of Sidon ensured that her stores of olive and flour did not run out (1 Kings 17 : 14–16). Cf. F. Mickiewicz, *Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza (rozdziały 1–11)...*, op. cit., p. 473. It should be noted, however, that this event was of an individual nature, while the miracle performed in Elisha's time pertained to a large group of addressees, which is closer to the event that the synoptics write about in Matthew 14 : 13–21; Mark 6 : 34–44; and Luke 9 : 12–17, as well as in Matthew 15 : 32–39 and Mark 8 : 1–10.

39 Cf. T. Hergesel, *Jezus cudotwórca*, op. cit., p. 160.

antithesis. Jesus gesture of raising His eyes towards heaven and His blessing⁴⁰ are clearly indicative of His relationship to God, Who through Christ's words and actions reveals Himself as the Father.

Although this miracle performed by Jesus has traditionally been interpreted as an indication of the new bread that Jesus gave to His disciples during the Last Supper (Matthew 26 : 26; Mark 14 : 22; and Luke 22 : 19),⁴¹ the multiplied bread is also a metaphor for God's word,⁴² which in its perfection feeds and satiates the Chosen People. The twelve baskets of left over food mentioned by the evangelists is symbolically significant. The Biblical numerology ties this detail of the narrative to the twelve tribes of Israel as well as the community of Jesus' disciples.⁴³ If that is the case, then the words of Jesus and, simultaneously, God expressed with the help of the metaphor of bread and what was left of it permeates salvation history, generously feeding all the generations. This generosity of God's gift is underlined in Matthew and Mark's Gospels by the account of the second miracle of the multiplication of the loaves with the participation of 4,000 people.

The structure of this story is almost identical in its aforementioned parallel verses. The circumstances preceding it are somewhat different. In a synthetic way, Matthew presents Jesus' healing activity in the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 15 : 29–31), while Mark focuses on just one example: the healing of the deaf mute (Mark 7 : 31–37). Among the sick presented to Jesus, Matthew mentions the lame, the blind, the deformed, and the mute. Thus these are people incapable of moving or of receiving external stimuli and thus cannot fully know the world. In particular the deaf mutes (Mark emphasizes this case) cannot

40 All the synoptics maintain an identical version of the account of this miracle performed by Jesus: ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εὐλόγησεν (Matthew 14 : 19; Mark 6 : 41; and Luke 9 : 16). Apart from the synoptics' narratives about the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, no similar phrase appears in any part of the Bible.

41 Cf. A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza (rozdziały 14–28)*..., op. cit., p. 46; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, Minneapolis 2007, p. 325; F. Mickiewicz, *Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza (rozdziały 1–11)*..., op. cit., p. 473.

42 A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza (rozdziały 14–28)*..., op. cit., p. 46 interprets the five breads mentioned in the Gospels as symbolizing the five books of the Torah. Meanwhile, he interprets the fish presented to Jesus as representing the remaining books.

43 Cf. tenże, p. 47. A similar interpretation is in A. Malina, *Ewangelia według świętego Marka. (rozdziały 1, 1–8, 26). Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Częstochowa 2013, p. 403; D. R. Donahue, D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, op. cit., p. 207. According to R. H. Stein, *Mark*, op. cit., p. 317, the number twelve has no direct or symbolic meaning. According to this author, it can only refer to the number of Jesus' apostles.

receive the Word of God. By healing those who have come to Him, Jesus includes them in the circle of the addressees of the subsequent miracle. Matthew ties the account of this to crowd's glorification of God, using the conjunction "for" in 15 : 32. Meanwhile, in 8 : 1 Mark indicates the chronological proximity of these events with the aid of the phrase: "In those days."

The second scene presenting the feeding of the people in the deserted place does not contain a reference to giving a blessing (εὐλόγησεν) over the loaves and fishes. Meanwhile, Matthew and Mark inform the reader that Jesus "gave thanks" (εὐχαριστήσας; Matthew 15 : 36, Mark 8 : 6). The story of the last supper also speaks of blessing and giving thanks (Matthew 26 : 26–27; Mark 14 : 22–23). Only Luke avoids this; in his narrative about the institution of the Eucharist, he writes that Jesus gave thanks twice over bread and wine (Luke 22 : 17, 19). Unlike the first story of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves, the second one does not contain any reference to Jesus raising His eyes towards heaven. To whom is this thanksgiving addressed to, if not to God? Even when Jesus appears to be the direct cause of a miracle and His disciples merely participate in it, this unique event is the Father's response to the prayer of glorification of His Son Christ.⁴⁴ The scale of Jesus' activity is emphasized both by the amount of food the disciples initially possessed and by the number of people whom He fed in the deserted place.

Neither Matthew nor Mark mentions the exact number of fishes. There is only mention of seven loaves and then seven baskets of the fragments of loaves. The number has symbolic significant and expresses the perfection of the Gospel sign that supersedes the Old Testament figures.⁴⁵ Jesus' command is sufficient for the miracle to take place, and the bread in the story is a metaphor for the word expressed by Christ, which is the real Word of God. Despite the doubts and skepticism of the disciples (Matthew 15 : 33, Mark 8 : 4), it satiates all who persistently follow Jesus and listen to His teachings. They are no longer only Jews, as in the first case, but also pagans. The route of the travels of Jesus, Who enters the deserted place near the Sea of Galilee, crossing

44 Cf. A. Malina, *Ewangelia według świętego Marka (rozdziały 1, 1–8, 26)*..., op. cit., p. 448.

45 The exegetes also mention other meanings. R. H. Stein, *Mark*, op. cit., p. 369 and R. H. Gundry, *Mark. A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, t. 1. 1–8, Grand Rapids 2004, p. 396–397 claims that the seven loaves and baskets refer to the seven deacons in Acts 6 : 3; Noah's seven commandments, which were given to the world according to the Jewish tradition; and, finally, to the Seven Nations of Canaan. Meanwhile, the frequent use of the number seven refers to the number of nations of the world or the disciples of the Lord.

the land of Tyre and Sidon as well as Decapolis.⁴⁶ Thus Jesus Himself heeds His disciples' attention to the fact that many in the crowd have come to Him from afar (Mark 8 : 3).⁴⁷ The universalism of His teachings, which is directed not only to the Jews, but also to the pagans, transcends the limits of the Old Testament and shows that God's attention does not focus on just one people and on His covenant with them (see: Deuteronomy 7 : 6; 29 : 11–12). In light of the second narrative about the multiplication of the loaves for 4,000 people,⁴⁸ Jesus gives broad access to the Word of God to all who desire it.

2.1.3. In Jesus' Conversation with the Pagan Woman (Matthew 15 : 21–28; Mark 7 : 24–30)

An important turning point concerning the addressees' of Jesus' teaching maps out His travel to Tyre and Sidon, both inhabited by pagans.⁴⁹ This event precedes the account in Matthew 15 : 32–39 and Mark 8 : 1–10 of the feeding of 4,000 people. The common element of the parallel narratives of the multiplication of food and of Jesus' encounter with a pagan woman in Matthew and Mark is the motif of bread, which is a metaphor for the Word of God. Jesus' reaction to the request of the woman who, according to Matthew 15 : 22 is a Canaanite and according to Mark 7 : 26 is a Syro-Phoenician indicates such a function in Matthew 15 : 21–28 and Mark 7 : 24–30. Unlike the laconic presentation of that woman's request in the Gospel according to Mark, Matthew cites everything she says, which includes calling Jesus the Lord and the Son of David (Matthew 15 : 22). Furthermore, there was talk not only of the request to heal the daughter tormented by an evil spirit. The evangelist also describes

46 Cf. A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza (rozdziały 14–28)...*, op. cit., p. 102; cf. A. Malina, *Ewangelia według świętego Marka (rozdziały 1, 1–8, 26)...*, op. cit., p. 445–446.

47 In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus mentions the road (probably that of return) that those who follow Him must walk across (Matthew 15 : 32). If return to one's home would entail growing weak, this is an indication that those who went after Jesus came from far-flung parts of Palestine.

48 This is also a number with symbolic significance and could indicate the origins of the people gathered by Jesus from the four corners of the world. Cf. A. Malina, *Ewangelia według świętego Marka (rozdziały 1, 1–8, 26)...*, op. cit., p. 448.

49 Luke's Gospel contains two references to Tyre and Sidon. The first (in 6 : 17) speaks of the crowds that followed Jesus and gathered at the foot of the mountain in order to listen to Him, also awaiting the healing of the sick. Along with the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, the evangelist also mentions those who come from Tyre and Sidon. They all become the addressees of the speech about the beatitudes. The second time these two cities appear alongside Chorazin and Bethsaida, to which Jesus directs His "woe to you" because they did not convert, even though their inhabitants have seen Jesus' signs (Luke 10 : 13; see: Matthew 11 : 21).

the reaction of Jesus, Who did not respond to her in a single word, and to the disciples asking Him to dismiss her (Matthew 15 : 23). Finally, there is Jesus' statement about His being sent only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15 : 24). Mark completely omits these three themes from his account; instead, he immediately turns to Jesus' statement that the women's children be fed first (Mark 7 : 27). Meanwhile, in the version of this event presented by Matthew, both Christ's silence (His lack of words to the pagan woman) and the logion directed towards His disciples is of great significance.

Bread (ἄρτος) given to children (Matthew 15 : 26, Mark 7 : 27) and the crumbs (ψιχία) from the table that the woman requests, asking for health for her possessed daughter (Matthew 15 : 27, Mark 7 : 28), metaphorically corresponds to the mentioned word. In the context of Jesus' words that He was sent to the Chosen People (Matthew 15 : 24) it seems obvious that the children who receive bread are the Israelites and the pagans are the dogs.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, the form of the verb ἀπεστάλην present in the text is an example of the use of the *passivum theologicum*, which implies God's activity.

The motif of the table present in Jesus' conversation with the pagan woman corresponds to the Biblical image of a feast. In Proverbs 9 : 2, 5 the personified Wisdom, which in the New Testament is Jesus, invites guests to the feast. His teaching gives people consolation. In His company, they find respite as the crowds who were twice fed by the multiplied loaves and fishes.⁵¹ The word that Jesus says also brings healing not only to Jews, but also to pagans. Although the bread and crumbs are materially interdependent, they indicate the order of revelation, which initially is directed to the Chosen People and only later to other nations. Thanks to Israel, they become God's "household members," and through Jesus they become the addressees of the good news.⁵² Christ's appearance near Tyre and Sidon unambiguously confirms this, while in its essence it also refers back to Elijah's visit to the widow in Zarephath of Sidon (1 Kings 17 : 9–24).

Right after her son is healed by the prophet, the woman says: "Now indeed I know that you are a man of God... The word of the Lord comes truly from your mouth" (1 Kings 17 : 24). Meanwhile, in the case of the Canaanite, according to Matthew, or the Syro-Phoenician woman, as Mark emphasizes,

50 Cf. D. R. Donahue, D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, op. cit., p. 237.

51 Cf. Mt 14, 13–21; Mk 6, 34–44; Łk 9, 12–17 oraz Mt 15, 32–39; Mk 8, 1–10.

52 Cf. A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza (rozdziały 14–28)*..., op. cit., p. 89.

the declaration of faith in Jesus' power precedes His activity. The woman's attitude of trust in both parallel pericopes of the synoptics also gains Christ's recognition, albeit not in an identical way. In Matthew 15 : 28, Jesus speaks of the greatness of the faith of the Canaanite woman. Meanwhile, in Mark 6 : 29 He expresses His wish for this to happen according to the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman. In any case, the comparison between the Old Testament story and the Gospel pericopes shows that Jesus' miracle transcends the Old Testament events that foreshadow it. Through faith in God's Son, the pagan woman's possessed daughter is liberated, making use only of the crumbs of Jesus' teaching, which is the real Word of God.

2.2. In the Fourth Gospel

Of the four evangelists, only John presents the teaching on the Word incarnate (John 1 : 14). For this reason, the fourth Gospel also contains the most developed metaphor of water and bread, expressing the function and meaning of the Word of God in the lives of Jesus' disciples. The contents that are of interest to us are found mostly in the account about the wedding in Cana (John 2 : 1–12), in the account of Jesus' stay in Samaria (John 4 : 1–42), and in the narratives on the living bread (John 6 : 1–71). They also appear in Jesus' address during the feast (John 7 : 37–44), in the discussion about the exposing of the traitor (John 13 : 21–30), and also in the narratives about Jesus' death (John 19 : 28–30) and in the story of the meal He prepared for His disciples at the Sea of Galilee after His resurrection (John 21 : 9–14). In light of the clear complementarity of the statements present there, the topics of discussion, the literary allusions, and the motifs, these texts can be divided and analyzed according to how the metaphor of bread and water is used in them. The one exception is the account of the wedding in Cana, which should probably be analyzed separately, focusing on the metaphors of water and wine present in it.

2.2.1. Water and Wine (2 : 1–12, 4–46)

John's account of the events in Cana find no parallels in the synoptics. It is also significantly different from the Greek dramas that formed part of the festival of Dionysius that were well known to them.⁵³ The wedding to which

53 Cf. S. Mędała, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana (rozdziały 1–12). Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Częstochowa 2010, p. 351.

Jesus, His Mother, and His disciples were invited refers to the messianic feast present in the Old Testament (Proverbs 9 : 2, 4–5; Isaiah 25 : 6).⁵⁴ This is indicated by the concurrence of water and wine, which are the material of Jesus' first sign and are related to the Biblical metaphor for the Word of God, in John's account. In addition to those elements that have been mentioned, it is worth scrutinizing the remaining elements of the account of the miracle at the wedding in Cana in order to see how they are interdependent and dependent on the metaphor mentioned in them.

The first element is the information that wine had run out, which Jesus had received from His Mother. The circumstances of this shortage, which also have Old Testament parallels, not only precede, but also liberate the moment in which the miracle takes place. This can be seen in the example of the previously mentioned story from the life of Moses and the prophets Elijah and his pupil Elisha.⁵⁵ Their relationship to Jesus, Who was present at the wedding in Cana, can help us to imagine the second element of the narrative: that of the wedding servers (Διάκονοι) who are present in John 2 : 5, 9. In accordance with Jesus' guidelines, they filled six stone water jars, thus preparing the event whose sole author was Christ. The jars of water that were normally used for ceremonial washings were the third compositional element of the story. Throughout the history of exegesis, there have been various interpretations of this number: the six days of the creation of the world, the six books, the six titles of Christ, and the six allegorical representations of His witnesses (John the Baptist, the anonymous disciple, Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael of Cana) whose message becomes a word worthy of faith like that said by God.⁵⁶ Regardless of the degree of probability, the discussed concepts have a common point of reference. It is the Old Testament that prepares the world for the full revelation in Christ. The fourth element of the narrative is water. If we suppose that it is a metaphor for revelation in the Old Testament, in its miraculous transformation into wine it should be considered to be an absolute novelty in the teaching about God preached by Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father. The fifth element of the story is the exposition of the miracle. The servers from the Gospel and Jesus' disciples who accompany Him properly interpret it. Only the wedding headwaiter ascribes the preservation of good

54 Cf. Y. Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni. Una traduzione e un'interpretazione*, trad. M. A. Cozzi, Bologna 2002, p. 223.

55 Cf. R. E. Brown, *Giovanni*, trad. A. Sorsaja, M. T. Petrozzi, Assisi 2010, p. 127.

56 Cf. S. Mędala, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana (rozdziały 1–12)...*, op. cit., p. 358–359.

wine to the young man, not knowing where it comes from. This information is reminiscent of the value of the Biblical message metaphorically expressed by water. It should become known and, subsequently, completely tied to Jesus, Who is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. In Him, salvation history gains an improved quality and the taste of fine wine (John 2 : 10). The disciples' faith is the effect of the miracle (John 2 : 11). This final, sixth element of the composition of the story confirms that Jesus' word is of a divine nature and can remedy human needs and deficiencies.⁵⁷ This is confirmed by the healing of a royal official in Cana in Galilee, where Jesus returns from Samaria (John 4 : 46–54). Both events include the narrator's mention of water, which Jesus turns into wine (John 4 : 46). The obvious reference to this event indicates its decisive nature and provides a model for Jesus' later activity in which the signs have revelatory value and water plays an important role in it.

2.2.2. Water (4 : 1–26, 7 : 37–44, 19 : 28–30, 34)

The most references to water can be found in the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (4 : 1–26). The term ὕδωρ appears there eight times (4 : 7, 10, 11, 13, 14 [three times], 15), but the symbol of water is evoked by several verbs: to drink (πίνω), to desire (διψάω), to draw (ἀντλέω), and to sputter (ἄλλομαι)⁵⁸ as well as the nouns: bucket (ἄντλημα), well (φρέαρ), and source (πηγή). The narrator identifies with a large degree of precision the place (Sychar, which is near the field that Jacob bought for Joseph; Jacob's field) and time (around six) of the event (4 : 3–6) whose key part is Jesus' dialogue with the woman (4 : 7–26).

The Biblical background of the scene presented by John is the mission of the servant Abraham looking for a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24 : 1–65), Jacob's meeting with Rachel (Genesis 29 : 1–14), and the story of Moses related to the journey to the land of Midian and his encounter with the daughters of Reuel (Exodus 2 : 15–22).⁵⁹ All these stories, which are related to the source of water (the well), end with the main protagonists getting married: Isaac with Rebecca,

57 Cf. *ibidem*, p. 365.

58 The verb used in this meaning in the New Testament appears only in John 4 : 14. Furthermore the author of the Acts of the Apostles uses it to describe the reaction of the cripple whom Peter healed at the gate of the temple called Beautiful in Jerusalem (3 : 8) and when he writes of the healing of a lame man by Paul (14 : 10). Each time, there is talk of the newly healed quickly getting on their feet.

59 Cf. S. Mędala, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana (rozdziały 1–12)...*, op. cit., p. 450.

Jacob with Rachel and Leah, and also Moses with Zipporah. Only the story of the Samaritan woman who at noon went to Jacob's well to fetch water ends differently. Such a situation in the life of that woman is different from those of the aforementioned women. Jesus briefly presents her characteristics, showing that the Samaritan woman had five husbands and the one she was with and the one she was with at the moment was not her husband (4 : 17–18). The life of the woman who came to the well in Sichar thus is reminiscent of the story of an unfaithful wife chasing after lovers (a personification of the pagan Baal) that give her bread and water, cotton, olive, and drink (Hosea 2 : 7),⁶⁰ even though God gave her all she wanted (Hosea 2 : 10).

However, the conversation with the woman above all exposes the truth about Jesus, Whose physical thirst should also be interpreted on a spiritual level. There is a great disparity⁶¹ between the two wells – the one in Sichar and the one beating inside Jesus – which is illustrated by the depth of the well described by the woman. This is not the only difference. The basic difference is related to the water itself and its benefactor. The water from Jacob's well only temporarily quenches physical thirst. Meanwhile, the one that Jesus offers makes one no longer thirst for anything (John 4 : 14). Water, which is the main motif of the first part of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, is clearly tied to eternal life, corresponding to the Biblical metaphor of the Word of God, which is pure wisdom (Proverbs 13 : 14, 18 : 4).⁶² In Jesus it brings the fullness of revelation and is accompanied by refreshing, inspiring activity of the Holy Spirit that causes one to act. This one becomes a fertile source sputtering towards eternal life.⁶³ Like water, which is a metaphor for the Law, increases thirst for God, the water of the Gospel, filled with the Holy Spirit, and an encounter with Jesus can completely quench that thirst.

The true Bridegroom of the woman who went to the well to fetch water is God encountered in Christ and revealed by Him to the world as the father. Discovering the truth about the Messiah (John 4 : 25–26), the Samaritan woman becomes a witness to faith in Him (John 4 : 28–29), leading others to an encounter with the Savior (4 : 39–42). The fact that thanks to her many inhabitants

60 Cf. *ibidem*, p. 450–451.

61 Cf. X. Léon-Dufour, *Lettura dell'Evangelo secondo Giovanni*, trad. A. Girlanda, F. Moscatelli, Cinisello Balsamo 2007, p. 313.

62 Water is also presented as a metaphor for the Law in such Samaritan texts as *Memar Marqah*. Cf. X. Léon-Dufour, *Lettura dell'Evangelo secondo Giovanni*, op. cit., p. 316.

63 Cf. R. Fabris, *Giovanni*, Roma 2003, p. 250.

of Sichar believed in Jesus is evidence of the power and effectiveness of His words as well as of the realization of prophetic promises of the coming of the messianic times and an image of widespread worship of the Father in the Spirit and in truth foretold by Him (John 4 : 23–24). The Samaritan woman's reaction responds to Isaiah's assurance that "the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea" (Isaiah 11 : 9; see: Ezekiel 39 : 29; Joel 3 : 1–2), which confirms the realization of Jesus' works, which are consistent with the will of the Father (John 4 : 34).⁶⁴ Its fulfillment becomes food for Jesus. Concern for this food is also the task of the disciples who are symbolized as reapers (John 4 : 36) making use of the toil of the sowers, or the prophets, but above all Jesus Himself (John 4 : 37–38). He is also the source of living water, which flows from His interior, which He speaks of clearly during His stay in the Jerusalem Temple during the feast (7 : 37–44).

The excerpt from the Scripture quoted by Jesus is in essence a paraphrasing of several prophecies referring to Him (Isaiah 12 : 3, 49 : 10; Ezekiel 47 : 1–12; Joel 4 : 18; Zechariah 14 : 8; Proverbs 18 : 4; Song of Songs 4 : 15; Sirach 24 : 30–31). Furthermore, the motif of water flowing from Christ's interior is a clear allusion to the one that Moses, implored by God, tapped from a rock for the thirsty Chosen People in the desert (Exodus 17 : 1–7; Numbers: 20 : 1–11). The evangelist's comment on Jesus' statement leaves no doubt that the gift of water mentioned in it is a metaphor for the foretold Holy Spirit (John 7 : 39). However, we should also recall that the one giving the Holy Spirit is the Word incarnate (John 1 : 1, 14), which, according to John's prologue, "pitched his tent" (ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν), thus desiring the salvation of every person. It is also completely in accordance with the Father's will (John 6 : 39–40). A firm resolution to fulfill this will is best expressed by the dying Jesus, when in John 19 : 28 He says: "I thirst" (διψῶ). This feeling cannot dull people, especially soldiers standing by the Cross who give Jesus vinegar (John 19 : 29–30). However, it can be quenched by completing the work entrusted by the Father. It consists of fulfilling His will and Jesus' sacrificing His life and body for the life of the world (John 6 : 51, 10 : 11, 15). The effectiveness of this gift is confirmed by blood and water flowing from Christ's side (John 19 : 34), confirmed additionally by one other eyewitness (John 19 : 35) and the Scriptures (John 19 : 36–37; see: Exodus 12 : 10, 46; Numbers 9 : 12; Psalm 34 [33], 21; Zechariah 12 : 10).

64 G. Sloyan, *Giovanni*, trad. F. Ronchi, Torino 2008, p. 83 sees the paradigm of conversion in the Samaritans' attitude.

God's speech – His word – contained within it is metaphorically expressed not only by water, which contains in it the power of the Spirit and fills those who believe in Christ. Accounts of the events at Golgotha above all present Jesus – the Word incarnate – nailed to the Cross and allow us to understand the meaning of the metaphor of the bread of life that descended from heaven (John 6 : 33, 51).

2.2.3. Bread (John 6 : 1–71, 21 : 9–14)

Of the twenty-four mentions of bread in the fourth Gospel, twenty-one⁶⁵ appear in the account of the miraculous feeding of 5,000 people (John 6 : 1–13). The structure of the account of this event in John's Gospel is similar to the first account by the synoptics (Matthew 14 : 13–21; Mark 6 : 34–44; Luke 9 : 12–17). Meanwhile, the circumstances directly preceding the miracle in the fourth Gospel correspond to the account of the second multiplication of the loaves in Matthew 15 : 32–39 and in Mark 8 : 1–10 and in one account present in Luke 9 : 12–17.⁶⁶

John is the only evangelist who writes that Jesus was the first to note the needs of the gathered crowd and to provoke the reaction of His disciples searching for a solution to this difficult situation. However, in the entire account in John Jesus takes the initiative. It is He who gives His disciples the command to ask those gathered to sit on the grass (John 6 : 10; see: Matthew 14 : 19; 15 : 35; Mark 6 : 39, 8 : 6; Luke 9 : 14).⁶⁷ He Himself also gives out loaves and fishes, giving thanks first (John 6 : 11; see: Matthew 15 : 36; Mark 8 : 6). As in the parallel accounts by the synoptics, this gesture indicates God as the protagonist in salvation history Who is concerned for Israel to the same degree as during their sojourn through the desert (Exodus 16 : 32, 35; Numbers 11 : 7–9; Deuteronomy 4 : 44–11 : 32, 8 : 3) when He cares for the people surrounding Jesus in the deserted place.

Jesus' sign contains a clear allusion to the events and protagonists of the Book of Exodus and thus to Moses as the intercessor between God and the

65 See: John 6 : 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 23, 26, 31, 32 [two times], 33, 34, 35, 41, 48, 50, 51 [three times], and 58 [two times]. Meanwhile, in John 13 : 18 there is talk of a piece of bread that Jesus dipped in the bowl and gave to Judas. The next two mentions of bread appear in the account of the miraculous catch and the meal prepared by the Resurrected for His disciples (John 21 : 9, 13).

66 Like John, the synoptics write about Jesus' healing: Matthew 15 : 29–31; Mark 7 : 31–37; Luke 9 : 10–11; and John 6 : 1–3.

67 The third evangelist does not mention grass in the place where those gathered sat. Instead, he writes that they sat in groups of approximately fifty people.

people, sent by God and instructing the people⁶⁸ and finally to the manna and Word of God as the basis for human existence. Also crucial is the evangelist's mention of the fact that all received as much food as they wanted. The Biblical manna that the sign of the multiplication of loaves and fishes alludes to met the individual needs of each of the Israelites (Exodus 16 : 4). Keeping in mind the numerous implications and polemics with Judaism that appear throughout the fourth Gospel, the interpretation that the event mentioned by John is a reference to synagogue liturgy seems appropriate.

The five breads could express the Torah, while the two fishes could be a reference to the collected Wisdom Books and Prophetic Books that by explaining the Law allow us to understand it.⁶⁹ Jesus' instruction for His disciples to gather the fragments that were left over (John 6 : 12) indicates the necessity that they preserve the gift they have received and be concerned for the words of Christ, of which the left over fragments of bread symbolize. The symbolic number of baskets (twelve) confirms the plentitude of the sign, but above all it emphasizes its perfection, thus foreshadowing another bread: the Eucharist, which ensures eternal life.

The conventional interpretation of the loaves multiplied by Jesus as a metaphor for the Truth⁷⁰ does not exhaust the topic introduced by John in the sixth chapter of his Gospel. The mere theology of the Word incarnate contained in the prologue designates a model of interpretation different from the metaphor for God's teaching that appears in the Old Testament. Jesus' lengthy speech on the Eucharist contains a statement that suggest that the real bread that descends from heaven is only the Word of God – metaphorically expressed with the aid of manna – but sent by the Father's Son (6 : 33, 35, 45) and His body, which is the food that brings eternal life (6 : 51–59). He who eats of it will never hunger again (6 : 35; see: Sirach 24 : 21).

The radicalism of Jesus' statements causes a growing number of listeners and imitators to turn their backs on Him. "As a result of this," John writes, "many (of) his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him" (John 6 : 66). Those who remained believed and through Peter's words confessed: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the

68 Cf. S. Hylan, *Allusion and Meaning in John 6*, Berlin 2005, p. 124–125

69 S. Mędala, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana (rozdziały 1–12)...*, op. cit., p. 551.

70 Cf. S. Hylan, *Allusion and Meaning in John 6*, op. cit., p. 162.

Holy One of God” (John 6 : 68–69) However, Jesus’ bitter words that one of the twelve He had chosen is a devil (John 6 : 7) puts this conviction into question. The scene from the last supper when Jesus gives Judas a piece of bread that had been dipped in the bowl shows the effects of the rejection of the previously accepted Word of God, which persists uninterruptedly in every word of the Son of God. The consequence of this is Satan’s entry into Judas (John 13 : 27) and, subsequently, Judas’ departure from the circle of the community that had gathered around Jesus (John 13 : 30), which was the light of the world (John 1 : 4, 8 : 12, 9 : 5).

The last place in the Gospel according to John where there is a reference to bread is the account of the meal that Jesus prepared for His seven disciples⁷¹ at the Sea of Galilee after His resurrection (John 21 : 9–14). After the miraculous catch, they are invited to come closer to the place where Jesus was waiting in order to be able to feed on the bread and fish prepared by Him (John 21 : 12) that He previously placed on the fire (John 21 : 9).

Like in the scene depicting the feeding of 5,000 people, in this instance Jesus also gives food. The group of seven disciples is symbolically significant and is an image of the complete community of those who believe in the Son of God and have received all the gifts of the Resurrected and bear great fruit (John 20 : 21–23).⁷² The miraculous catch once more confirms the effectiveness of Jesus’ Word to His disciples, the Word that they will preach to the world under the leadership of Peter. The net filled with fish that Simon Peter stretches out on the bank after being instructed by Jesus appears to be an image of the fruits of preaching the words of eternal life (John 6 : 68). They are expressed by the bread and fish that the resurrected Jesus gives to His disciples (John 21 : 13). This scene also instructs who the community of believers in Christ should feed on the Word of God, interpreting the Old Testament in light of the Gospel (John 20 : 31). Its center is the comforting and hopeful message about God the Father Whose Son was sent to the world, died and was resurrected so that we could all have eternal life through Him and in Him.

71 John mentions only Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee’s sons, and two others of Jesus’ disciples whose names are not mentioned (John 21 : 2).

72 Cf. S. M. Schneiders, *John 21 : 1–14*, “Union Seminary Review” 43 (1989) nr 1, p. 74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096438904300108>.

Conclusion

This study of the appearance of bread and water in the four Gospels indicates a continuation of the Old Testament idea of food as a metaphor for the Word of God. However, the classic expression for God's speech is enriched by contents that transcend the Biblical protagonists. The phenomenon of the metaphors of bread and water in the Gospels consists of the fact that they refer to both the word contained in the referenced books of the Old Testament and to the word of Jesus Christ. He – the Son of God – is the one Whose appearance sheds new light on the understanding of Biblical prophecies. All of them are fulfilled in Him. The Word that Jesus, the Son of God, says is as effective as the one that Yahweh directed to His people in salvation history, feeding and satiating them like no earthly benefactor. The metaphor of bread and water for the Word of God in the Law, the Wisdom Books, and in the prophets is then enriched by the motif of wine and fish. However, what changes the meaning of the Biblical metaphor is the Word incarnate mentioned in John's text (John 1 : 14). Never before had the Word of God become flesh and could say that it was bread and eating It brought eternal life (John 6 : 51, 54).

Abstract

Bread and Water as Metaphors for the Word of God in the Four Gospels

Bread and water are among the best-known Biblical metaphors for the Word of God. This article presents a study of their occurrence in the four Gospels against the backdrop of the Old Testament. However, an analysis of the explicit references to bread and water is not exhaustive with regards to the topic under discussion. Therefore, other terms that relate to them, such as food, spring, hunger, thirst, feeding, and drinking, are also of great interest. Studying the metaphors for the Word of God reveals both a continuation of the Biblical ideas within the four Gospels and a total novelty in the expression of the Word that became flesh (John 1 : 14).

Keywords: bread; water; metaphor; the Word of God; the Old Testament; Gospels; incarnation

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